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McAlester Army Ammunition Plant For Immediate Release

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General visits ammunition plant, talks 2020 planning

McALESTER, Okla. – Brig. Gen. Kristin K. French had a message for the senior leaders of McAlester Army Ammunition Plant when she visited her subordinate installation here July 30: find the plant's business niche within its core competencies and plan for 2020 now.

It was her first visit to the plant since assuming command of Joint Munitions Command at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill. July 2 and gave her an opportunity to learn about its capabilities.

She was clearly focused on the future and encouraged MCAAP Commander Col. Joseph G. Dalessio and his senior civilian leaders to avoid a "single point of failure" by identifying business niches for 2020 and beyond.

"We've got to look at that because it's what the Army is looking at," she said during her opening remarks. "Where are we going to be postured in 2020?"

French said one of her goals while in command will be to look at the future of the Joint Munitions Command, as the Army prepares to exit Afghanistan in 2014, and how its subordinate installations support their customers.

During the 72-minute formal plant briefing, the general was given insight into the plant's core competencies – ammunition production, ammunition and missile maintenance, ammunition and missile demilitarization and logistics operations – and more.

The difficulty with planning, she told MCAAP leaders, is the uncertainty of what lies ahead. With civilian employees currently furloughed through the end of the fiscal year, coupled with an impending drawdown of Soldiers in the coming years, the Army said it may also have to look at reducing promotions, Soldier relocations and other ways to shrink its budget.

"We have to know that every decision that is made can affect people," French said.

The general said some JMC installations have encountered challenges shaping their workforce to meet fluctuating business needs. Gary Reasnor, MCAAP's civilian deputy, told her the plant uses several appointment types, including permanent on-call and term workers with one-year contracts, to adjust its workforce to meet the increasing and decreasing needs of customers.

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"You'll find that McAlester is probably the most flexible workforce in all of AMC," he said.

The visit included walking tours at A-Line, a bomb and warhead production facility, demilitarization of the 155mm Dual Purpose Improved Convention Munition artillery projectile, the Sensor Fuzed Weapon produced under a contract with Textron Defense Systems, and the missile maintenance facility, where Stinger, Maverick and Chaparral missile systems are tested and recertified by plant workers. She also learned about the multi-faceted capabilities of the explosives laboratory.

During the visit to A-Line, the general was given hands-on instruction. Working under the watching eye of Michael Bush, an explosives production worker, she worked to fill a BLU-109 general purpose bomb with plastic bonded explosives for the U.S. Navy.

French was also given a windshield tour that included B-Line modernization efforts, which the U.S. Air Force helped to fund, and an outload pad, where during an exercise in March 2010, Depot Operations workers demonstrated their ability to load 435 containers in 24 hours for overseas crisis.

Supporting commanders in the United States is currently leading MCAAP to a new core competency.

Steve Cox, director of Engineering and Public Works, told the general that off-site rail support accounts to 10-15 percent of the plant's annual revenue and it has the potential to grow. The plant has the Defense Department's only mobile railroad construction and repair team.

During fiscal years 2011 and 2012, MCAAP completed 23 mobile rail projects with a total revenue value of \$17 million, according to David Franks, Engineering Resources and Management Division, Directorate of Engineering and Public Works.

By the end of the nearly 9-hour day, the general had received a walking tour of most major facilities, but had still covered only about 10 percent of MCAAP's 45,000 acres.

"It was a great tour," French said. "There's a lot going on here and I know I hit just the tip of your capabilities."

Dalessio was also pleased with the orientation.

"It was great to showcase our unique capabilities in support of the Joint Force," he said. "The commanding general left with an appreciation and better understanding of what MCAAP does for our Warfighters every day."

McAlester Army Ammunition Plant is the Department of Defense's premier bomb and warhead loading facility, and is one of 14 industrial facilities in the Joint Munitions Command. It is vital to

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ammunition stockpile management and delivery to the joint Warfighter for training and combat operations.